



Chestnut Ridge Casino - Rear Terrace



Cayuga Creek - Como Lake Park

STUDY OBJECTIVES

- *Connect the rural population centers of countywide significance and other physical resources having countywide significance (as defined in the Guiding Principles for Countywide Land-Use Planning report, dated 12/99), with the County Parks and the existing urban trail system.*
- *Connect the rural centers with other trail systems (state, local) and points of interest along the way.*
- *Provide optional day long or half day long bicycle route “loops” from the rural centers and/ or County Parks.*
- *Utilize the county roads whenever practical so that these routes can be developed as an extension of the County Park system.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Erie County owns and operates a parks system containing nearly 11,000 acres of land on 38 sites throughout the county. These sites include eleven large multi-purpose parks, five undeveloped parks, thirteen forestry lots, seven small special-purpose parks and two multi-use recreational trails. The County park system was established in 1925, and initially was comprised of four sites and 2,280 acres of land. Periodic land acquisition, over the years, has expanded the original holdings to the system’s current size, and future expansion is always under consideration.

Previous County park system master plans were prepared in 1961, 1976, and most recently in 1988. Since the last plan much has changed within the park system and throughout the County. The County therefore initiated an update of its Park System Plan in 2002. This current Parks System Master Plan is intended to establish a framework for preservation, restoration and enhancement of the parks over the next 15-20 years. This plan is the first component of a full update of the Erie County Comprehensive Plan. Subsequent components will address County-wide land use, transportation, infrastructure, economic development, farmland protection and similar regional planning issues.

1.2 STUDY PROCESS

1.2.1 PROJECT TEAM

From the start of this project, the master plan process has included input and collaboration from a large, comprehensive project team including County staff, steering committee (*Leadership Team*), private consultants, various park user groups, and individuals from all over Erie County. To complete the Master Plan update, the County retained the services of two separate teams of consultants to complete the various component parts:

The following team is preparing the Master Plan Update, which includes: recommendations for the overall park system, individual park master plans, a strategy for the waterfront parks, management/consolidation opportunities, and a marketing and financial strategy.



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The following firm is preparing the Inventory and Assessment portion of the project, as well as the Recreational Trails element:





Sample Home Page for the Project Website



Traveling exhibits at Galleria Mall



Traveling exhibits at Galleria Mall

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The process of developing an inter-connected County Park Trail System began with an examination of similar planning initiatives. Those that were utilized are summarized below:

1. *Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC) Bicycle Master Plan (updated Summer 2002) - illustrates a comprehensive bicycle transportation system throughout Erie and Niagara Counties.*
2. *Greenway System Implementation Plan (October 1998) - master plan document for a continuous network of pathways that connect parks, parkways and waterfront areas throughout the City of Buffalo.*
3. *Comprehensive Plans - the recreational trail recommendations contained within the municipal master plans prepared for Erie County communities over the past five years.*

The team worked closely throughout the course of the study, sharing information, and jointly conducting the public outreach. The final Master Plan document is a collaborative effort, with technical background reports documenting the detailed inventory and assessment work.

I.2.2 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Given the extent of the parks system, it was not possible to hold specific meetings for each individual park. However the public consultation approach included outreach to as many interested groups and individuals as possible throughout the course of the project. Outreach was achieved through the following methods:

WEBSITE:

A Website dedicated to the Parks Master Plan was the primary source for ongoing information updates and public input. The site was upgraded periodically as project materials became available,

Opportunities were provided for the public to share concerns and ideas for improving the park system.

PARKS USER SURVEY:

A survey was posted on the Web Site and directly distributed to an extensive list of park user groups, environmental interest groups, and municipal government organizations. Over 300 surveys were completed and sent in, with good representation from all corners of the County. *A summary of survey results is provided in the Appendix.*

TRAVELING EXHIBITS:

Graphic displays highlighting park plans and key Master Plan recommendations were set up at various sites and at key events throughout the County. Exhibits were placed at the Erie County Fair, Walden Galleria Mall, downtown Rath Building and at other notable locations with heavy pedestrian traffic opportunities. Additional “park-specific” displays were distributed to the various town halls and/or libraries near the individual park sites. Displays were also posted at AutumnFest at Sprague Brook Park.

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES:

Two public open houses were held in separate areas of the County, attended by over 200 people. The open houses were conducted as drop-in events that allowed ample review of presentation boards and information pertaining to the Master Plan, as well as one-on-one discussion with members of the project team and County staff and elected officials. This format was selected over a formal public hearing, as providing for maximum input from individuals who prefer a more low-key setting for discussing their concerns or sharing their opportunities for enhancement of the parks system. *A copy of the “posters” (graphic displays) can be found in the Appendix.*

MEETINGS AND WORK SESSIONS:

In addition to sending out surveys, the project team met with a number of park user groups and individuals that requested a separate meeting on specialized or park specific issues. *For a list of the larger meetings, refer to the side-bar.*

Two meetings in an open house format were held to present the entire draft master plan, including the recreational trails component,

LIST OF MEETINGS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Meeting Focus / Organization</u>
April 3	Monthly Review
April 10	EC Development Comm. Board
May 1	Monthly Review
May 21	County Visioning Session
May 29	Monthly Review
June 25	Park Summit, Chestnut Ridge Park
July 3	Monthly Review
July 18	Hunters Creek User Groups
July 19	EC Parks Superintendents
August 1	Hunters Creek Neighbors Meeting
August 6	Hunters Creek Workshop
August 14	Monthly Review
August 21	In-house Workshop
September 4	Monthly Review
September 18	EC Development Comm. Board
September 24	Central Park / Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy
September 26	Legislature, Community Enrichment Committee
October 3	Blue Collar Union Representatives
October 9	Monthly Review
October 17	Erie County Environmental Management Council
October 22	Energy Mtg / Cornell University Rep.
October 28	Open House #1, East Aurora MS
October 29	Trout Unlimited
November 1	Kenneglen / WNY Land Conservancy (Representative - Betty Cheteney)
November 1	Legislator Ranzenhoffer
November 6	Monthly Review
November 6	EC Fisheries
November 7	Elma Meadows
November 13	Open House #2, Amherst Central HS
November 18	Kiwanas Club- Wales
November 19	Delaware North Park Service Div.
November 20	Hunters Creek Trail Expert Mtg
November 26	In-house Review with L. Rubin
December 4	Monthly Review
December 18	Delaware North Park Service Div.
January 15	Monthly Review
January 21	In-house Workshop
January 22	EC Development Comm. Board
February 5	Monthly Review

to the public. The written comments received have been summarized in Table 1-1 (page 1-8). In addition, the responses to these comments have also been addressed in the proposed recreational trail recommendations.

1.3 MASTER PLAN COMPONENTS

The resulting Master Plan is comprised of the following five elements:

A. INVENTORY AND ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING FACILITIES AND CONDITIONS

This includes a detailed inventory of all structures, furnishings, athletic facilities, play equipment and other appurtenances within the County's developed parks. A database of inventory information was created to give the County a management tool for future maintenance and funding decisions.

B. REVIEW AND UPDATE OF EXISTING PARK PLANS

All parks in the system were looked at for specific upgrades and enhancement recommendations and Master plan updates were prepared for each of the developed parks in the County system. Recommendations are made that take into account long-term environmental sustainability, current and future recreational opportunities, maintenance requirements and fiscal responsibility. For the oldest parks in the system, with heritage significance, an emphasis has been placed on preservation and restoration of original park features. For all parks, the focus is on preserving natural resources and key scenic features, while developing a better system of interpretation and awareness within these beautiful properties.

In addition, new, conceptual master plans were created for five designated parks within the overall system. These are:

- HUNTERS CREEK PARK,
- WENDT BEACH PARK,
- BENNETT BEACH PARK,
- COMO LAKE PARK - EXPANSION AREA;
- AKRON FALLS PARK - EXPANSION AREA.



Trail within naturalized meadow setting - Ontario



Trail in Hunters Creek Park

C. RECREATIONAL TRAILS ELEMENT

The trail plan is focused on two primary goals. The first is to better connect the parks to their surrounding communities and other area attractions. This would establish smaller area trail loops that will provide opportunities for linking the specific parks to other area destinations, business districts and neighborhood centers, and cultural attractions. The second goal is to look at broader “park to park” connections throughout the County, expanding upon the regional Bicycle Route Guide recently published by the Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional transportation Council. Recommendations are made for specific improvements and enhancements to the existing County trails, including the Riverwalk system along the Niagara River and the Two Mile Creek Greenway.

D. WATERFRONT STRATEGY

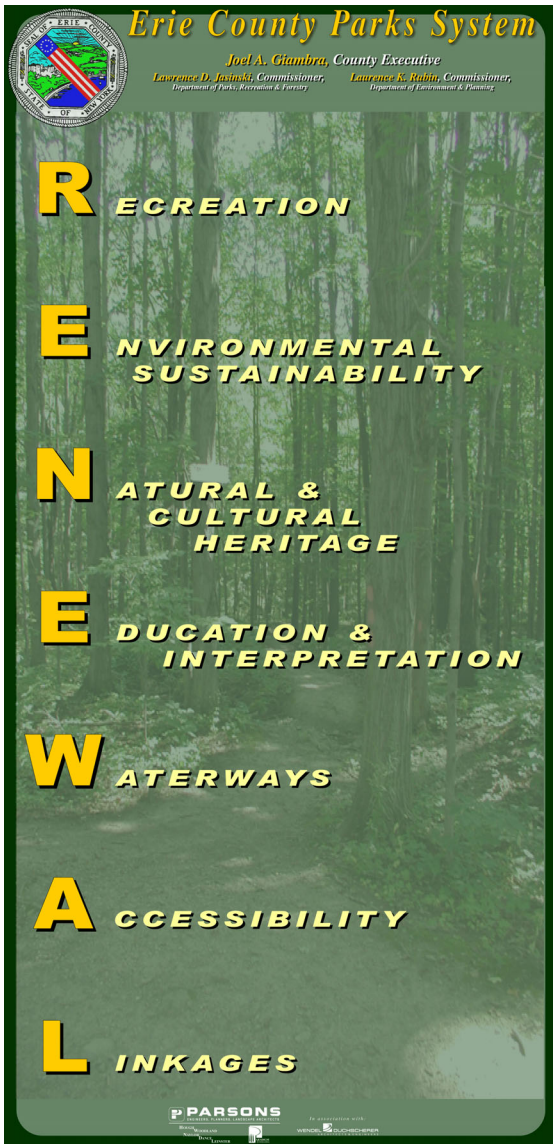
This component of work provides a specific focus on the recreational opportunities along Erie County’s 90 miles of waterfront, including strategies for gaining public access to the water and for promoting tourism potential within Erie County. The recommendations build upon previous waterfront planning efforts, including that undertaken by the County (Horizons Waterfront Action Plan) in 1992, and recognizes external initiatives proposed or underway by the state and local municipalities.

E. ASSESSMENT OF CONSOLIDATION AND MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE COUNTY PARKS SYSTEM

Although an in-depth departmental operational review was not a component of this study, this effort begins to examine opportunities for consolidation within the County Parks Department and to look at creative management approaches to parks maintenance and funding. In addition, opportunities for establishing partnerships with local municipalities, agencies and local community-based groups were explored.



*View of Historic Grain Elevators from Ohio Street Park
(Buffalo River Parks)*



"Theme" of Project - Traveling Road Show Poster

The completed Erie County Parks System Master Plan is comprised of four documents, as follows:

VOL. 1 PARK SYSTEM MASTER PLAN

VOL. 2 PARK MANAGEMENT PLANS

VOL. 3 RECREATIONAL TRAIL SYSTEM

VOL. 4 PARKS INVENTORY AND ASSESSMENT



Wendt Beach



Scoby Dam Park

	COMMENTS RECEIVED	RESPONSE TO COMMENTS
1.	Establish a safe bike route from East Aurora to Emery Park. Consider either a bike lane up Center Road as far as the High School, or a bike path through Town Park to Hubbard Road so that park is accessible via Sweet, Underhill and Emery Roads. Also consider a bike route through the Majors property.	All of these comments have been considered and investigated. Most have been incorporated into the recreational trail plans for this area (see Figure 4-4).
2.	Establish a continuous path along the waterfront.	This is a regional planning initiative that is addressed in the Regional Waterfront Trails System (Section 2.0).
3.	Roadside Trails should accommodate horses and carriages.	In most areas where off-road, multi-use trails are proposed an adjacent trail could be planned to accommodate equestrian interests.
4.	Linkages for greenways and trail corridors need to be mapped out now and planned BEFORE housing developments occur to avoid protest by locals. Disclosures should be provided at the time of sale of adjacent properties.	The planning effort is the primary goal of this project.
5.	Would like to see a better connection to the Town and Village of Orchard Park from Chestnut Ridge.	This comment has been incorporated into the plans for this area (see Figure 4-5).
6.	Trails on roadways are dangerous.	In all cases where the roadway traffic conditions were determined to be high speed and/or high volume, multi-use off-road trails are proposed.
7.	Love the idea of connecting trails between parks and other attractions.	This one of the goals of this project.
8.	Wherever possible on road reconstruction projects along major routes, sidewalks should also be reconstructed to be multi-purpose trails. Lake Avenue in Lancaster is an ideal example.	In many cases, the planned recreational trail development is recommended to occur in conjunction with and simultaneous to highway projects.
9.	County needs to take larger role in promoting regional trails, including stepping in to help Amherst.	Comments #9 - 12 all relate to the on-going debate over recreational trails in Amherst. Both projects mentioned, along with other routes, are identified as future off-road trails in this area on the urban linkages plan (Figure 4-10).
10.	Please help get the Lehigh Valley and Peanut Line Trails developed in Amherst.	
11.	Don't give up on trails through Amherst.	
12.	Don't let homeowners next to railroad right-of-ways stop recreational trail development.	

Table 1-1

2.0 REGIONAL WATERFRONT TRAIL SYSTEM

In contrast to the shorter trail loops between county parks and population centers described in Volume 3, the Regional Waterfront Trail System (RWTS) totals over 88 miles of pathways along Erie County's waterfronts. The RWTS in aggregate will create a facility that is clearly a regional asset connecting various points of county-wide significance. The purpose of this section is to provide the framework to facilitate the planning, funding, design and construction of a completed facility. Please refer to the RWTS Map Figure 5.2 for orientation relevant to this text.

The Erie County Regional Waterfront Trail system will be a continuous network of pathways connecting parks, waterfront areas, businesses and neighborhoods. The completed facility will provide for safe, identifiable and maintainable means of alternative transportation while providing recreational opportunities and improved access to the County's extensive waterfront. The Erie County Trail network is both a backbone for waterfront connectivity and the embodiment of a principle. The principle is the belief that open space and waterfront areas are public assets and that generous, green, easily accessible space at the water's edge is a necessary part of any waterfront development. This study reinforces the vision that someday the recreational trails will pass through all waterfront activity centers throughout the County. What has been successfully accomplished with the built Riverwalk along the County's northern waterfront must continue along the southern waterfront to complete the vision. A completed facility will provide pedestrians, bicyclists, joggers, skaters, strollers, skiers and others with an opportunity for improved quality of life, which will make for a better Erie County. To that end, this system is being coordinated with the Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC) and its member agencies.

A completed Trail system would also advance the vision of making this network a state owned and operated facility. Being one of New York State's great waterfronts, worthy of a first-class amenity, the RWTS would allow for the completion of a continuous Trail System

from Fort Niagara on Lake Ontario to Evangola State Park in southern Erie County.

The impacts of a completed waterfront trail facility will be far reaching and justify the capital expense necessary for implementation of the RWTS. When completed, the facility will provide the following specific benefits to the residents of the County as well as the tourists who visit the area:

1. *Increased public access to the waterfront.*
2. *Unprecedented linkage of local attractions, most of which are currently seen as disconnected and isolated from each other and from adjacent land-uses.*
3. *Increased economic development by increasing traffic, and therefore the commercial potential of the waterfront. The RWTS is a low-tech, relatively inexpensive way to expand the use and profitability of the County and its waterfront.*
4. *Reduced traffic congestion by allowing and encouraging safe bicycle and pedestrian travel between neighborhoods, the waterfront and various attractions.*
5. *Increased recreational opportunities and green space for the region's residents, for whom the RWTS will be a symbol of their inclusion in waterfront life.*
6. *Increased integration of the County's recreational opportunities including the City's magnificent Olmsted Parks which will be linked to the waterfront and to each other through the greenway network.*
7. *Increased educational opportunities through elements such as the Industrial Heritage Trail on the Buffalo River, historic markers along the RWTS, linkage to the proposed Cobblestone Historic District in downtown Buffalo and through the impact of simply bringing the public to areas with such a rich and varied history.*
8. *Enhanced quality of life and health to the Great Lakes human and wildlife communities as waterfront access leads to public concern for the areas significant natural resources.*

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9. *The RWTS could also function in many places as a buffer, protecting the County's waterways from structures that might otherwise be placed right at the water's edge.*

2.1 DESCRIPTION AND STATUS:

The entire Trail System will be comprised of a network of individual trail segments that are at various stages of development ranging from early conceptual planning to built and in-use. The following text will serve to describe each segment and its current status. The format places emphasis on the primary waterfront alignment beginning at the Erie Canal to the north and moving south along the Niagara River, the Inner Harbor and then Lake Erie. Each segment of this facility's "backbone" is identified with numbers 1 - 16. Letters are used to identify the significant connecting linkages from adjacent communities to the primary trail, again, beginning in the north and moving south. These linkages include:

- A. *The Ellicott Creek Trail in the Town of Amherst*
- B. *Two-Mile Creek Trail in the Town of Tonawanda*
- C. *The Sherwood Greenway in the Town of Tonawanda*
- D. *The Beaver Island Bike Path in the Town of Grand Island*
- E. *The West River Trail in the Town of Grand Island*
- F. *The Scajaquada Pathway in the City of Buffalo*
- G. *The Industrial Heritage Trail in the City of Buffalo*
- H. *The Buffalo River Greenway in the City of Buffalo*
- I. *The Lake Road Trail in the Town of Evans*

2.2 PRIMARY WATERFRONT RECREATION TRAIL SEGMENTS

Again, we refer to exhibit Figure 5.2 for a coordinated orientation with the following text.

I. **AMHERST CANALWAY TRAIL:** CONSTRUCTED / IN USE

This segment, approximately 5.7 miles in length, is situated along the south edge of Tonawanda Creek and the Erie Canal in the Town of Amherst. Built in two phases, one in 1980 and the other in 1984, the trail begins at the Amherst Museum at New Road and currently ends at Sweet Home Road. It consists of both off-road and limited on-road segments. The Town of Amherst maintains the trail. Please note the NY State Canal Corporation will be constructing an off-road trail from the Amherst Museum northward along the Erie Canal all the way to the City of Lockport and beyond.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- THE FUTURE CANAL TRAIL TO LOCKPORT
- AMHERST VETERANS CANAL PARK
- AMHERST NATURE VIEW PARK

2. **ERIE CANALWAY TRAIL (PHASE 3):** PROPOSED / NOT FUNDED

Approximately 2.0 miles long, this segment is situated along the south side of Tonawanda Creek between Sweet Home Road and Niagara Falls Boulevard. Designed in concept only, this is the last remaining segment of the north end of the RWTS. It is anticipated that the Town of Amherst will maintain the trail once completed.

The key potential linkage of this segment includes:

- ROUTE 62, NIAGARA FALLS BOULEVARD

3. ERIE CANALWAY TRAIL (PHASE 2): PROPOSED AND FUNDED

This segment situated between Niagara Falls Boulevard and the City of Tonawanda/Town boundary line. Approximately 2.0 miles long, the project will go out for construction bids by the Fall of 2003. Once constructed, it will consist of approximately 1 mile off-road trail and 1 mile on-road.. It is anticipated that the Town of Amherst will maintain the east end of the trail and Erie County will maintain the west end.

The key potential linkage of this segment include:

- ROUTE 62, NIAGARA FALLS BOULEVARD
- ELLICOTT CREEK COUNTY PARK
- ELLICOTT CREEK TRAILWAY

4. ERIE CANALWAY TRAIL (PHASE 1): CONSTRUCTED / IN USE

This 2.2 mile segment, meanders along the south bank of the Erie Canal/Tonawanda Creek between the City/Town of Tonawanda border and the Niagara River. At the confluence with the river, it connects with NYS Bike Route 5 (into Niagara County) and continues south along the Niagara River. This segment is situated in the City of Tonawanda and consists primarily of off-road segments. Noteworthy of this segment is the fact that it passes through the heart of an active commercial area jointly shared by the Cities of Tonawanda and North Tonawanda. The majority of it has been operational since 2001. Maintenance of this segment is still under review..

The key linkages of this segment include:

- THE CITY OF TONAWANDA CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT
- GATEWAY HARBOR PARK
- NYS BIKE ROUTE 5
- THE RIVERWALK

5. THE RIVERWALK: CONSTRUCTED / IN USE

Probably the most heavily used segment of the entire network, the Riverwalk is approximately 13 miles in length and traverses the east shore of the Niagara River from the Erie Canal/Tonawanda Creek south to downtown Buffalo. This popular segment consists of a generous 13 foot wide pavement that is off-road the entire length with one exception along Niagara Street. This exception travels “on-road” or “on sidewalk” along the Ferry Street/Hampshire Avenue section of Niagara Street. This condition is less than ideal compared to the balance of the Riverwalk, however, site constraints including the Black Rock Channel and the I-190 make this area very difficult and cost prohibitive to develop an “off-road” trailway. To date, there are no proposed improvements for this stretch of the Riverwalk.

The most heavily used area of this segment is in the linear waterfront parks of Niawanda and Isle View in the City and Town of Tonawanda respectively. The use was so heavy in this area that certain segments had to be widened in recent years to accommodate the crowds. A 3 mile section just south of the South Grand Island Bridge detours away from the waters edge and runs off-road but parallel to River Road through the industrial area of the Town of Tonawanda. The northern most portion of the Buffalo section was constructed in 2000 and the balance of the Buffalo Riverwalk has been recently renovated. However, more work remains to bring certain areas of the older section up to acceptable design standards. The Erie County Parks Department maintains the Riverwalk.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- NIAWANDA PARK
- TWO MILE CREEK TRAIL
- VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK
- ISLE VIEW COUNTY PARK
- THE GRAND ISLAND BIKE PATH

- THE FUTURE CHERRY FARM PARK
- THE FUTURE SHERWOOD GREENWAY
- OLMSTED'S HISTORIC RIVERSIDE PARK
- ERIE COUNTY'S ONTARIO STREET BOAT LAUNCH
- ERIE COUNTY'S TOWPATH PARK
- THE SCAJAQUADA PATHWAY
- SQUAW ISLAND PARK
- BRODERICK PARK / BIRD ISLAND PIER
- THE PEACE BRIDGE AND CANADA'S TRAILWAY NETWORK
- OLMSTED'S HISTORIC FRONT PARK AND PARKWAY SYSTEM
- LASALLE PARK
- ERIE BASIN MARINA
- BUFFALO'S INNER HARBOR, NAVAL PARK AND GREENWAY PLAZA
- DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL AREAS
- THE PROPOSED INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE TRAIL AND BUFFALO RIVER GREENWAY

6. **THE OUTER HARBOR / ROUTE 5 TRAILWAY:** PROPOSED AND FUNDED

This segment begins in downtown Buffalo where the Riverwalk ends at the foot of Main Street and the Buffalo River. The proposed length is approximately 3.2 miles and runs south to Gallagher Beach. In absence of an on-grade Route 5 bridge, the northern portion of this segment is the most challenging as the trail proposed runs “off-road” between the north edge of the River and industrial structures, with portions “on-road” across the Ohio Street bridge connecting back with Route 5/Furhman Boulevard along the lakeshore. At the intersection of Ohio Street and Furhman Boulevard, a future spur could split north up to the outer harbor area as the main trailway turns south to connect with the existing asphalt path at the south end of the Small

Boat Harbor. Maintenance of this segment is to be determined.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- BUFFALO’S INNER HARBOR, NAVAL PARK AND GREENWAY PLAZA
- DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL AREAS
- THE PROPOSED INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE TRAIL AND BUFFALO RIVER GREENWAY
- THE FUTURE IMPROVED TIMES BEACH AREA
- THE OUTER HARBOR AREA (FESTIVAL GROUNDS, BUFFALO YACHT CLUB, ETC.)
- THE SMALL BOAT HARBOR
- TIFT FARM NATURE PRESERVE
- GALLAGHER BEACH

7. SMALL BOARD HARBOR/GALLAGHER BEACH: CONSTRUCTED / IN USE

This 0.8 mile segment runs along the west side of Furhman Boulevard around the south parking area for the Small Boat Harbor (0.5 miles) and directly adjacent to the Gallagher Beach area (0.3 miles). The 0.5 mile section is asphalt pavement and was constructed in 1996. The 0.3 mile section is made of some asphalt but is primarily made of wood along a formal boardwalk that defines the beach area. The Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority owns and maintains this segment.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- SMALL BOAT HARBOR
- GALLAGHER BEACH

8. TIFT STREET CONNECTION: PLANNED AND FUNDED

The City of Buffalo recently won a Congestion, Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) grant for the design and construction of this 0.5 mile 10’ wide off-road segment along the west edge of Furhman Boulevard from Gallagher Beach south to the existing pedestrian

bridge over the Union Ship Canal. Construction is expected to begin in the Spring of 2004. The City of Buffalo will own and maintain this segment.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- GALLAGHER BEACH
- TIFFT NATURE PRESERVE
- THE FUTURE UNION SHIP CANAL DEVELOPMENT
- THE TIFFT STREET PLAY FIELDS 0.4 MILES TO THE EAST

9. UNION SHIP CANAL TO MILESTRIP ROAD: PROPOSED/ NOT FUNDED

Included in this segment is the short section from the Union Ship Canal to Ridge Road which is currently defined as an on-road trail (running along the old abandoned portion of Furhman Boulevard). It needs to be planned and constructed properly as a truly off-road multi-use trail and should be included with the following defined section.

The State DOT is currently studying Route 5 between Ridge Road and Milestrip as part of the Southtowns Connector Study. The EIS for this study is scheduled for completion in the summer of 2003. Included in the design options is a proposed 2.8 mile off-road trail along the west edge of Route 5. It would connect to the existing off-road trail at Woodlawn Beach. There is no current funding available, however, once the planning is done and approved, the trail could be separated from the road project and funded and built prior to any future road improvements. Maintenance of this segment is to be determined.

The key linkages along this segment include:

- THE FUTURE UNION SHIP CANAL DEVELOPMENT
- THE FUTURE BETHLEHEM STEEL DEVELOPMENT
- WOODLAWN BEACH STATE PARK

10. WOODLAWN BEACH: CONSTRUCTED / IN USE

This 0.5 mile existing asphalt multi-use trail was in approximately 2000, as part of the Milestrip/Route 5 interchange improvements. It meanders along the west side of Route 5 directly adjacent to Woodlawn Beach State Park. Ownership and maintenance of this segment is still under review.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- WOODLAWN BEACH STATE PARK

11. HOOVER ROAD AREA: PROPOSED AND FUNDED

This approximately one mile segment, which runs from the Woodlawn trail at the north end of Hoover Road and Route 5 south to Old Big Tree Road and Route 5, has recently been funded. The Town of Hamburg was awarded an NYS Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) grant to design and build this combined off-road (approximately 2/3 of a mile) and on-road (approximately 1/3 of a mile) trail segment. Construction is anticipated to begin during the summer of 2004. The Town of Hamburg will be responsible to maintain this segment.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- WOODLAWN BEACH AREA
- HOOVER BEACH RESIDENTIAL/RESTAURANT AREA

12. OLD BIG TREE ROAD TO OLD LAKE SHORE ROAD: PROPOSED AND FUNDED

This 4.5 mile segment is currently being studied by the NYSDOT for reconstruction of Route 5 between Old Big Tree Road to the north and Old Lake Shore Road to the south. The study is further analyzing three design options, all of which include an on-road bicycle accommodation, either a 14' wide shared lane or a 5' wide dedicated bike lane. An off-road trail is not possible in this segment due to the proposed travel lane designs in relation to the width of the right-of-

way and the desires of the waterfront residents along the segment. Sidewalks, however, are proposed on both sides of the road. The project is funded for construction sometime in 2007 or 2008. It is anticipated that future maintenance of this segment will be performed by the State.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- HAMBURG TOWN PARK AND BEACH

13. OLD LAKE SHORE ROAD IN HAMBURG: NEITHER PROPOSED OR FUNDED

This approximately 3.1 mile segment is one of two segments along the Regional Waterfront Trail System that is not proposed. This segment is defined by Old Shore Road at Route 5 on the north end, along Old Lake Shore Road south to Eighteen Mile Creek, all within the Town of Hamburg. There have been preliminary discussions by the Town to plan closing this gap but to date there have been no immediate steps taken (such as grant applications). This will be the Town's next priority after segment #10, defined previously, is underway.

14. TOWN OF EVANS MULTI-USE PATH: PROPOSED / NOT FUNDED (EXCEPT FOR SEGMENT #15 BELOW)

The Town of Evans used grant money to study the development of a multi-use trail along Old Lake Shore Road from the north town line at Eighteen Mile Creek south to Evangola State Park. This 13.7 mile segment is planned to be mostly off-road, crossing at various points to either side, with a few minor sections on-road where space is limited. Only one segment, #15 defined below, is funded; however, the Town of Evans is aggressively pursuing funding sources to complete the entire length. Determination of who will eventually maintain the trail once completed has yet to be made.

Key linkages of this segment include:

- STURGEON POINT MARINA
- WENDT BEACH COUNTY PARK

- BENNETT BEACH COUNTY PARK
- EVANS TOWN PARK AND BEACH
- CAMP PIONEER
- LAKE ERIE BEACH PARK

15. TOWN OF EVANS MULTI-USE PATH: PROPOSED AND FUNDED (BETWEEN WENDT BEACH COUNTY PARK AND EVANS TOWN PARK)

The Town of Evans recently received a Federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21) grant for the design and construction of an approximately 2.8 mile trail along Old Lake Shore Road between Wendt Beach and Town Park. The trail will be off-road and meanders along either side of the road, depending on the right-of-way and field conditions. Design will be completed in 2003 and construction is expected to begin in the spring of 2004. Once completed, determination of who maintains the trail will need to be made.

Key linkages of this segment include:

- WENDT BEACH COUNTY PARK
- BENNETT BEACH COUNTY PARK
- EVANS TOWN PARK
- FUTURE LINKAGE TO THE VILLAGE OF ANGOLA

16. EVANGOLA STATE PARK: CONSTRUCTED / IN USE

There is an existing 1.2 mile, 8' wide off-road multi-use asphalt trail in this segment of the Regional Waterfront Trail System. New York State owns and maintains this trail as it runs along Old Lake Shore Road through Evangola State Park. There are other trails in Evangola State Park that connect this trail to the beach.

17. EVANGOLA PARK TO THE CATTARAUGUS INDIAN RESERVATION: NEITHER PROPOSED OR FUNDED

This 1.1 mile segment along Old Lake Shore Road between Evangola State Park and the Cattaraugus Indian Reservation, is the final gap in the entire Waterfront Regional Trail System. To date, there is no proposal to complete the link, however, there appears to be ample space to continue the off-road pathway from Evangola State Park along the west side of Old Lake Shore Road.

The following segments represented by letters and beginning in the north and moving south, identify the significant connecting linkage from the adjacent communities to the primary waterfront trail.

A. ELLICOTT CREEK TRAILWAY: CONSTRUCTED / IN USE

Constructed mainly within the Town of Amherst, this very popular off-road multi-use trail link is approximately 5 miles long and runs from the Maple Road/North Forest trailhead, northwest along the meandering Ellicott Creek to Niagara Falls Boulevard across from Ellicott Creek Park. The Town of Amherst maintains this segment. An extension of this trail through Ellicott Creek Park in Tonawanda was completed in 2001. It terminates at the Erie Canal.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- AMHERST MEMORIAL HILL GROVE
- TOWN OF AMHERST MUNICIPAL GOLF COURSE
- AMHERST PEPSI CENTER
- UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO, NORTH CAMPUS
- ROUTE 62, NIAGARA FALLS BOULEVARD
- ELLICOTT CREEK COUNTY PARK
- ERIE CANALWAY TRAIL

B. TWO MILE CREEK GREENWAY: CONSTRUCTED / IN USE

This trail linkage, approximately 2 miles in length, is situated along Two Mile Creek through the Town and City of Tonawanda. The south end, approximately 0.5 miles is on-road, adjacent to the Town golf course, with the balance of the trail off-road, meandering along either side of the Creek northward to the Niagara River and the Riverwalk. This greenway is maintained by the Erie County Parks Department.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- SHERIDAN PARK/GOLF COURSE
- THE FUTURE SHERWOOD GREENWAY
- VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK
- ISLE VIEW COUNTY PARK AND RIVERWALK
- NIAWANDA PARK

C. SHERWOOD GREENWAY: PLANNED AND FUNDED

This trailway linkage is planned as an approximately 1.8 mile off-road multi-use recreational pathway that extends the Two Mile Creek Greenway to the Riverwalk at Sheridan Drive. This segment is entirely in the Town of Tonawanda aligned through private property (Praxair, Inc.) for the first 1/5 and within the south right-of-ways of Woodward Avenue West and Sheridan Drive the remaining 4/5th's. New York State recently announced a \$2.1 million dollar grant for design and construction of this pathway, expected to be completed by 2005. Once completed it will be owned and maintained by the Town of Tonawanda.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- SHERIDAN PARK/GOLF COURSE
- TWO MILE CREEK GREENWAY
- THE RIVERWALK

D. BEAVER ISLAND BIKE PATH: CONSTRUCTED / IN USE

This off-road segment runs from the South Grand Island Bridge along South Parkway to Beaver Island State Park. The bike path is approximately 3.5 miles in length. It runs through a residential area of the island providing easy access to Beaver Island State Park. The path connects Grand Island and its parks to the Niagara Riverwalk in the Town of Tonawanda.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- THE RIVERWALK
- I-190
- BEAVER ISLAND STATE PARK

E. WEST RIVER TRAIL: PROPOSED / NOT FUNDED

This segment runs approximately 9 miles along the Niagara River from the existing trail at Beaver Island State Park to Buckhorn Island State Park. The proposed trail is off road between West River Parkway and the River. However, a couple of ideas are being considered, including closing one lane of the Parkway to traffic, but keeping it green for pedestrians.

Reference to Grand Island Boulevard should also be made. The GBNRTC is proposing more of a direct bicycle route through Grand Island along the Boulevard. Currently, the concept is proposed, but not funded.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- BEAVER ISLAND STATE PARK
- NIKE BASE PARK
- BUCKHORN ISLAND STATE PARK

F. SCAJAQUADA PATHWAY (PHASES I AND II): CONSTRUCTED / IN USE

This 2.1 mile trail linkage connects Delaware Park with Niagara Street just short of the existing Riverwalk. The 10' wide asphalt off-road pathway meanders along the north bank of the Scajaquada Creek intersected by two at grade crossings on Grant and Niagara Streets. The initial phase was built in 1992 and the second phase was built in 1999. The City of Buffalo Department of Public Works, Parks and Streets maintains this linkage.

I. SCAJAQUADA PATHWAY (PHASE III): PROPOSED AND FUNDED

This final phase of the Scajaquada Pathway will complete the missing section for a continuous link to the Niagara Riverwalk. The pathway alignment begins west of Niagara Street, crosses Scajaquada Creek and runs north along the east side of the I-190 and into the US Army Corps parking area where it meets the Riverwalk. The pathway is presently in final design and construction is expected to begin in the summer of 2003. The City will also maintain this final segment.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- DELAWARE PARK AND THE SURROUNDING CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS
- BUFFALO STATE COLLEGE
- GRANT/AMHERST COMMUNITY
- RIVERWALK

G. INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE TRAIL: PROPOSED / NOT FUNDED

This trail linkage is unique in that it is a proposed tour route for pedestrian, bicyclist and motorists along the City streets and sidewalks in and around the mouth of the Buffalo River. The impetus behind this trail is the display and interpretation of the many existing grain elevators on Kelly Island and along South Park Avenue, Ohio Street, Smith Street and St. Clair Street. The proposed plan was developed in 1996 by the Industrial Heritage Committee, Inc., who are continually

looking for potential funding sources. A small section is being funded and constructed as part of the Inner Harbor Project.

The key linkages along this segment includes:

- THE BUFFALO INNER HARBOR
- DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL AREAS
- THE BUFFALO RIVER GREENWAY

H. BUFFALO RIVER GREENWAY: PROPOSED / NOT FUNDED

The City of Buffalo (via the Buffalo Greenways Implementation Plan) and the Friends of the Buffalo Niagara Rivers (via the Buffalo River Greenway Plan) have completed the needed planning efforts. The trail meanders along both sides of the River, along the banks, adjacent streets and neighborhoods and through the local parks. Cazenovia Creek is also included in this greenway trail making this segment a true greenway network. The intent is that as new development occurs in the area, the trail be included and be built in phases. Simultaneous to these efforts, the Friends are continually looking for funding sources.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- CONWAY PARK
- SMITH STREET PARK
- BAILEY AVENUE PARK
- SENECA BLUFFS PARK
- MONGOVAN PARK
- STACHOWSKI/HOUGHTON PARK
- CAZENOVIA PARK
- HILLERY AND BUTLER PARKS

I. TOWN OF EVANS BIKE PATH: PLANNED/ NOT FUNDED

This 1.3 mile stretch of pathway is planned to connect the proposed bike path along Old Lake Shore Road to the Village of Angola. The off-road pathway would run along the north side of Lake Avenue. Once completed it will be owned and maintained by the Town of Evans.

2.3 CONCLUSION

In all, the RWTS is comprised of 88 miles of trails, of which 36 miles are existing (41%) and 52 miles have yet to be built. Through review of the existing and proposed trail segments that comprise the Regional Waterfront Trail System, the following conclusions and recommendations are made to advance Erie County's planning of the waterfront as a regional asset:

- *It is clear there is a strong desire by most waterfront municipalities to improve their existing, or plan, design and build new linkages to create a continuous waterfront trail system. An organized process and program needs to be developed and followed for optimum coordination between these municipalities and the County to facilitate completion of the trail.*
- *One such avenue is coordination with the GBNRTC Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee and the NYSDOT in development of the Shoreline Trail, which extends from Fort Niagara in Niagara County on Lake Ontario, south to Evangola State Park. There is overlap between Erie County's Regional Waterfront Trail System, the Shoreline Trail and NY State's Seaway Trail. Not to be overlooked, and equally important is the necessary coordination with the Buffalo Greenway Implementation Plan.*
- *As part of the coordination efforts, the various unbuilt segments of the Waterfront Trail need to be evaluated in a forum that will help set the regional priorities. This*

“Strong consideration should be given to making the system a NY State owned and operated facility.”

will serve to focus energy and resources on targeting specific segments for funding sources.

- *The two segments with no proposals advanced (#13 in the Town of Hamburg and #17 in the Town of Brant) should move into a planning cycle to prompt dialogue at a regional level on how and when it is best to complete the missing segments.*
- *In order to efficiently advance a completed Waterfront Trail System, a plan should be developed to educate the public about trail systems, with emphasis on the improved quality of life issues and answers to the most common concerns raised by the public. An education program geared for disseminating factual information would off-set the misinformation being commonly held, particularly regarding safety, security and property value concerns.*
- *To prepare for a public awareness process, case study research and documentation should be performed. This effort would promote factual and understandable information to the public in a consistent manner throughout the County, regardless of what municipality a trail is proposed in. Issues that need to be addressed include, but are not limited to: maintenance responsibilities/ procedures, liability concerns, property value impacts, safety/ security issues, etc.*
- *In order to promote trail system expansion to the public, consistent supervision and proper maintenance of the existing waterfront trails is if utmost importance. For example, there is a marked difference between the Ellicott Creek Trail and the Scajaquada Pathway and how each is managed. Inter-municipal agreements and procedures need to be developed and followed in order to have a consistent Regional Waterfront Trail System.*
- *Along a similar vein, it is recommended that design standards be developed and incorporated into the Trail System. A design vocabulary of consistent or at least compatible site furnishings, signage, historic markers, pavement markings, interpretation, trailheads, etc.*

should be established sooner rather than later to allow the next segments to set the stage with the agreed upon standards.

- *Where possible, through the greenspaces adjacent to the system, develop secondary connector trails to the primary Waterfront Trail. For example, new trails in Evangola State Park would connect the beach to the Waterfront Trail.*
- *Finally, once the Regional Waterfront Trail System is completed, strong consideration should be given to making the system a NY State owned and operated facility. Erie County's trail success could be coupled with a Niagara County trail system to combine for a true regional waterfront asset. Imagine a continuous State Park Trail System beginning at Fort Niagara to the north and connected some 80 miles later to Evangola State Park to the south. State highlights along the way would include the Niagara Reservation, Beaver Island State Park, the proposed Buffalo Outer Harbor State Park and Woodlawn Beach State Park. Our beautiful State shoreline could then easily compliment that of our neighbors across the water in Ontario, Canada.*

3.0 TYPICAL CONDITIONS

The range of design treatments available for a recreational trail system includes off-road multi-use pathways and on-road bicycle lanes, wide curb lanes, paved shoulders or shared lanes. Also included among these treatments is bicycle route signage designed to alert motorists of increased bicycling activity and to designate specific bicycle routes.

It should be noted that the Class I, II and III designations that the County previously used for bicycle facilities are no longer commonly used. These classes have been replaced by the more descriptive conditions listed below:

3.1 MULTI-USE PATH

Multi-use paths (formerly designated as Class I) are special use facilities which provide physical separation from motorized traffic (see Figure 3-1). In general, these paths are intended to supplement the roadway network and provide access to otherwise inaccessible areas. However, they are also often utilized within the public right-of-way parallel to roadways. Typically, multi-use paths are about 10' wide paved surfaces to allow two-way traffic.

3.2 BICYCLE LANE

Bicycle lanes (formerly designated as Class II) are one-way facilities in the direction of traffic flow that use a portion of a roadway shared with motor vehicles. They are designated by signing, striping and pavement markings to indicate their exclusive use by bicyclists (see Figures 3-2 and 3-3).

3.3 WIDE CURB LANE

Wide curb or outside lanes are on-street facilities in which bicyclists and motor vehicles share the same travel lane. Where prescribed, these outside lanes should be a minimum of 14' wide (see Figure 3-4). These facilities are useful where bicycle lanes are warranted but are prevented due to physical constraints.

3.4 PAVED SHOULDER

Paved shoulders are not part of the motor vehicle travel lane. As such, they are separated from the outside travel lane by an edge stripe. When these facilities are part of a designated bike route system, parking should be prohibited on such shoulders except in the event of an emergency. Paved shoulders as bicycle facilities have the widest application in rural areas.

3.5 SHARED LANE

Shared lane facilities exist when bicyclists and motor vehicles share the same travel lane on a roadway. Shared lanes typically are 12' wide or less (see Figure 3-5). These facilities are most common on neighborhood streets and rural roads and are preferably reinforced by signage which increases driver awareness of bicycles.

3.6 BICYCLE ROUTE

As mentioned previously, bicycle routes (formerly Class III facilities) are identified only by signage which directs bicyclists along preferred routes to specific destinations. Bike route signage can be established on both multi-use paths and along bike lanes, paved shoulders, wide curb lanes or shared travel lanes. Therefore it is recommended that bike route signage be utilized as part of the comprehensive recreational trail networks proposed within this study.

It has been found that the range of abilities for bicyclists can be condensed into three groups. These are:

- *Group A - advanced or experienced cyclists*
- *Group B - basic or casual adult cyclists*
- *Group C - child bike riders*

With the focus of this study on family recreation opportunities, the requirements of Group B and C have been planned for. These riders prefer low speed, low-traffic volume streets or designated bicycle facilities such as bike lanes or multi-use paths. Both groups will also adapt well to usable shoulders on rural roadways.

3.7 NON-COUNTY PARTNERSHIPS

Despite a couple of notable exceptions locally (the Peanut Line and Lehigh Trail in Amherst), the public sentiment regarding family-oriented recreational trails is to explore as many off-road linkages as possible. To accomplish this, the County will have to form partnerships with some non-county entities. A summary of the anticipated process to initiate these partnerships follow:

3.7.1 UTILITY CORRIDORS

The various snowmobile clubs active in Erie County commonly utilize these corridors as part of their network of trails. Sharing paved, multi-use pathways with snowmobiles is not considered to be wise from either a maintenance or a safety perspective. However, it could be possible in some areas to expand the use agreement for the utility corridor and develop multi-use paths adjacent to the snowmobile trails. The snowmobile trails can also be shared by equestrian groups.

GAS LINES

- *National Fuel*

The majority of the utility corridors used by National Fuel is under private ownership and used by National Fuel through easements. To use any privately owned land permission must be granted by the landowner. National Fuel does however own a portion of corridors in Erie County, mostly in the Lancaster and Clarence areas. A check of County Tax Records will reveal if a proposed corridor is owned by National Fuel or is under private ownership. If it is determined that the proposed land is owned by National Fuel, a written request must be submitted to the Land Department at National Fuel. The request would state the intended use and location. Once this information is submitted to the Land Department, an internal proposal would be compiled and a decision would be made formally accepting or denying the request.

POWER LINES

- *National Grid (formerly known as Niagara Mohawk)*

Due to security and liability concerns it is National Grid's policy not to invite any third parties to use their land. However, permission may still be granted in rare instances. Before an application would be accepted, the County would first have to acquire all the necessary insurance, proof of consent from all neighboring landowners, and pay all fees associated with the application. Once all three prerequisites are met, the application would then be submitted to the Real Estate Office in the City of Buffalo where an official decision will be made.

3.7.2 RAILROAD CORRIDORS

There are two scenarios in which railroad corridors can be utilized for recreational trails. They are described below:

ABANDONMENT (RAILS-TO-TRAILS)

· *The first step to building a Rail-to-Trail multi-use path is to determine ownership and if the corridor is abandoned. A request for Abandonment must be submitted and accepted by the Surface Transportation Board in order for a railroad corridor to be considered abandoned. The Status of abandonment can be determined by contacting the railroad company or through the rail office in the State Department of Transportation. After abandonment the railroad company usually removes the tracks and ties for salvage. Municipalities have the first opportunity to purchase these abandoned corridors from the railroad which can then be surfaced with asphalt, crushed stone or another material appropriate for the intended trail use. Occasionally the railroad companies leave the bridges and tunnels intact. Therefore the new owner would only have to add wood decking and other appropriate features.*

EASEMENT (RAILS-WITH-TRAILS)

· *Many communities have started to team with railroad companies to construct a trail that runs alongside active tracks. In most cases, a full easement is granted for the*

use of the land. The trail can usually be incorporated into the county 'umbrella policy' to alleviate the railroad of liability. Similar to an easement is 'railbanking'. When a railroad announces its intention to abandon a corridor, interested groups or agencies can apply to the Surface Transportation Board to have the corridor railbanked and used in the interim as a trail.

There is one specific example of potential railroad corridor acquisition that relates to the proposed recreation trails outlined in this study. The Buffalo and Pittsburgh Railroad, Inc. owns a corridor that runs from Salamanca to Buffalo (see item 19 on Figure 4-9). The Railroad company had filed an abandonment exemption with the federal registry. A number of companies that reside on the line protested. Also the United States Department of Energy and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority protested the abandonment and the application was denied in 1998. If it was not denied the Railroad company probably would have removed the track and ties and might have sold the corridor property. Since it was denied, the railroad company has left the track and ties in place. If the company gave up permission to use the corridor, it would be up to the county to remove or move these items. The Colden County Rails to Trails had requested a public use condition as well as a request for interim trail use. To date it has not been determined if this has been granted.

3.7.3 LOCAL AND STATE ROAD RIGHT-OF- WAYS

It has already been stated that one of the primary objectives of this planning initiative is to utilize county roads whenever practical. The philosophy is to develop these county road linkages as extensions of the park system. However, in some areas, utilizing either local or state road right-of-ways as linkages makes the most sense. Generally, successful partnerships for bicycle facilities within these areas will be determined by the ability of the jurisdictions involved to resolve maintenance and liability issues.

3.8 MAINTENANCE

The jurisdiction(s) responsible for the maintenance of planned bicycle facilities should be established prior to construction. In addition, the annual costs of maintaining these facilities has to be budgeted for. Neglecting routine maintenance will eventually create bicycle facilities that are undesirable and unsafe. Deteriorating facilities will eventually become a liability for the county.

Broken glass, sand, litter and fallen leaves often accumulate on multi-use pathways, bike lanes and paved shoulders. Therefore, as a minimum, regular maintenance should be provided to sweep the debris from bicycle facilities. If multi-use pathways are to be cleared of snow, then this should be done by plowing. De-icing agents and abrasives can damage bicycles and create potentially unsafe conditions.

Yearly inspections of all bicycle facilities should also be conducted. These inspections should focus on the following items:

- *Surface repairs - small bumps, cracks or potholes*
- *Pavement edges - should be uniform and not have abrupt drop-offs*
- *Vegetation - remove overgrown plant material that is encroaching onto bikeways and inhibiting both maneuverability and sight lines*

Maintenance requirements can be reduced through proper planning. Good edge treatments and adequate base materials will increase the longevity of paved surfaces. Placing plant materials a sufficient distance from bikeways will minimize encroachment problems. Additionally, some communities have initiated “adopt-a-trail” programs where civic groups or other organizations take responsibility for some routine maintenance. As in all agreements, the responsibilities of any organization interested in this program should be clearly spelled out.

YEARLY INSPECTIONS OF ALL BICYCLE FACILITIES SHOULD ALSO BE CONDUCTED. THESE INSPECTIONS SHOULD FOCUS ON THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

- *Surface repairs - small bumps, cracks or potholes*
- *Pavement edges - should be uniform and not have abrupt drop-offs*
- *Vegetation - remove overgrown plant material that is encroaching onto bikeways and inhibiting both maneuverability and sight lines*

3.9 LIABILITY

The Bicycle Federation of America report titled Liability Aspects of Bikeway Designation presents a compelling argument for reducing potential of increased public liability as it relates to bikeways.

Several points are presented here:

- *Bicyclists have a right to use the road and the local highway agency has a responsibility to make it as safe for bicyclists as it does for motorists. Because the presence of bicyclists can be predicted, extra need for safety may be plainly apparent at some locations and thus require greater care and attention than would be the case if bicyclists were absent.*
- *The duty to provide a reasonable safe highway for public use remains with the designated government agency. That agency has a responsibility to maintain the highway, inspect it for defects and hazards and to remove any such hazards or provide some warning of the defect to highway users.*
- *Most importantly, the designation of bikeways will not affect the government highway agency potential liability because the liability already exists for providing a safe environment for bicyclists, so long as they are not expressly forbidden from using the road. It is in the best interest of the highway agency to comply with applicable laws, guidelines, and recommended procedures relating to the design, construction, operation and maintenance of bikeways as a means of reducing the risk of liability for bicyclists.*

The development of bikeways thus has the potential for reducing liability because properly developed bike routes should have the net effect of reducing accidents involving bicyclists. Reducing the number of accidents reduces liability.

“Properly developed” is a key issue for Erie County. As long as the rationale is justified on how or why a specific improvement was designed then there is limited liability for design to the county. Any new facilities will be designed to industry standards and guidelines to the fullest extent possible. However, it should be noted, in many cases involving development of trail facilities into existing site conditions (as opposed to new build), it is not always feasible to follow design guidelines exactly and compromises sometimes have to be made.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PHASED IMPLEMENTATION

The initial goal of the recreational trails study is to establish community-based trail linkages. This accomplishes many of the objectives set forth for this study but primarily the opportunities for connections to the nearest county park or other points of interest through day long or half day long bicycle route “loops”. These proposed routes will be mostly comprised of on-road facilities and the utilization of existing off-road pathways. This will provide the greatest cost efficiency for the initial phased development. A summary of the anticipated costs of development for each community-based trail has been prepared (see Section 4.2).

Later phases of the recreational trail study will focus on establishing a county-wide trail network. This will create the opportunities for both “park-to-park” trail linkages and improved access to the existing urban and waterfront trail systems. These proposed routes will rely more heavily on developing significant off-road alternatives.

For the purposes of clarity in designating the proposed routes on the maps for this study, the typical trail conditions described previously have been consolidated into three categories:

1. *Proposed off-road trail (dashed green lines) - these proposed routes equate to off-road multi-use paths.*
2. *Proposed on-road bike lane (solid red lines) - this category includes designated lanes with and without adjacent parking as well as utilization of paved shoulders.*
3. *Proposed on-road shared lane (dashed red lines) - these proposed routes equate to either wide curb lane or shared lane conditions.*

These categories are graphically depicted on the maps along with the constraints that were observed for each area (difficult hill, high speed traffic, high traffic volume, narrow shoulder and at-grade railroad crossings).

Please see Figure 4-1 for a county-wide reference to the larger scale maps or windows that illustrate the proposed community-based trail linkages summarized below.

4.1 COMMUNITY-BASED TRAIL LINKAGES

4.1.1 CLARENCE / AKRON AREA

The Towns of Clarence and Newstead currently have a significant amount of developed off-road trails. The proposed trail network in this area utilizes these trails in combination with proposed on-road shared lane trails to create a 17 mile loop that connects the Village of Akron and Hamlets of Clarence Center and Clarence Hollow. Connection to a short on-road bike lane along State Route 5 from the existing off-road trail would occur via a proposed off-road segment that follows a natural gas pipeline corridor. The trail would then be an on-road shared lane along Goodrich Road past Town Place Park to Lapp Road. There would also be an on-road shared lane trail on Lapp Road past Beeman Creek County Park to either a proposed off-road Trail or on-road shared lane along Strickler Road. This window also depicts an additional 6.5 miles of off-road trails directly connecting the existing off-road trail to Akron Falls County Park to the east and Beeman Creek County Park to the north. The proposed off-road trail that connects to Beeman Creek follows a utility corridor. The off-road trail branching off towards Akron Falls County Park was suggested as a possibility by a resident during one of the open houses held for public input. It was conveyed to the consulting team that a potential easement which follows a former mining operation in this area could be available for trail development. Due to the importance of several local horse farms, the proposed off-road trail into Akron Falls County Park should include provisions for equestrian trails as well. The 9.5 miles of proposed on-road shared lane trails described above will complete the mentioned loop. Within the Village of Akron there is also a very short segment of an on-road shared lane recommended along State Route 93.



Looking southwest along the existing off-road path near the Village of Akron



Looking east on Lapp Road near Strickler Road. Beeman Creek County Park is on the left hand side. An on-road shared lane is recommended here.



Looking east on William Street near Lake Avenue the existing paved shoulder could be widened for the proposed on-road bike lane.



Looking west along abandoned railroad tracks at Central Avenue in the Village of Lancaster. Location for potential off-road trail.

4.1.2 DEPEW / LANCASTER AREA

The proposed recreational trails in the Depew-Lancaster area create two small loops. An approximate 10 mile long loop connects the Villages with Westwood Park and Walden Pond Park. This proposed loop would follow an abandoned railroad corridor and State Route 20 for a total of 6.5 miles of off-road trails. The off-road trail along the railroad corridor would go between Central Avenue, in the Village of Lancaster, to Ransom Road. The Village has already developed the property around Central Avenue as a light industrial park and a partnership for further development would need to be established. A partnership with New York State would also need to be developed for the proposed off-road trail within the right-of-way of Route 20. Additionally, 1.5 miles of on-road with bike lanes along Pavement Road and Central Avenue have been proposed and 2.2 miles of on-road shared lanes along Ransom Road and Westwood Road have been proposed.

Another 10.5 mile loop connects the Villages with Stiglmeier Park, Reinstein Woods State Nature Preserve, Volunteer Fireman's Memorial Park, and Como Lake County Park. The proposed trails would run on-road along Como Park Boulevard, Lake Avenue, William Street, and Bowen Road, creating 4.6 miles of on-road shared lane trails and another 5.9 miles of on-road bike lanes (9.2 miles total). Lake Avenue is a local road and will require coordination with the municipality to accommodate the on-road shared lane proposal.

It should also be noted that the Town of Cheektowaga will be constructing a trail through Stiglmeier Park that heads west along Como Park Boulevard to Union Road. From there the trail will utilize a railroad corridor to continue further west to Harlem Road.

4.1.3 EAST AURORA / WALES AREA

The proposed trail network in the East Aurora/Wales area utilizes all types of trails. An on-road bike lane is being proposed through the Village on Main Street through the historic district past the Milliard Fillmore house east to the new Knox State Park on State Route 16. Additional on-road bike lanes are proposed for Center Street, starting at the south edge of the Village of East Aurora, across the East Branch of Cazenovia Creek, and continuing past East Aurora High School. Most of the proposed trails in this area are on-road shared lanes. The less traveled roads by the two county parks, Emery County Park and Hunter's Creek County Park, lend themselves to this type of trail. Route 16 is a high speed, high volume roadway. Therefore, an off-road trail in the state right-of-way is proposed along this route from Lapham Road south to Warner Hill Road. These proposals would allow a family to travel a 14.5 mile loop starting in the Village of East Aurora south through Emery County Park then east over to Hunters Creek County Park and back to the Village of East Aurora. By developing the off-road trail along Route 16, this loop would be cut in half. Most of the proposed trails shown on this window are on-road shared lanes (12.8 miles total). There are also 4.2 miles of off-road trails and 3.7 miles of on-road bike lanes proposed.

4.1.4 HAMBURG / ORCHARD PARK AREA

The proposed recreational trails in the Hamburg / Orchard Park area tie the population areas of the Village of Hamburg, the Village of Orchard Park and North Boston to Chestnut Ridge County Park, the undeveloped Eighteen Mile Creek County Park and to the parks along Lake Erie. An on-road bike lane is proposed to start in the Village of Orchard Park on State Route 240, and continue south along an off-road trail within the state right-of-way at the Village line because the road becomes a high speed road at that point. The trail continues off-road along Route 240 (which becomes Route 277) past Chestnut Ridge County Park, up to the top of a hill. The trail then becomes an on-road bike lane again on Herman Hill Road that connects the North Boston area. This is a local road requiring a partnership with the municipality.

The Village of Hamburg is connected to Chestnut Ridge County Park by an on-road shared lane along Newton Road. The Village of



Centerline Road looking East. Hunters Creek County Park is on left hand side. An on-road shared lane is proposed in this area.



Center Street looking North. East Aurora High School is on the left hand side. The existing paved shoulder could be extended to create an on-road bike lane in this area.



Looking south on Route 277 past Chestnut Ridge County Park. An off-road trail is proposed within the state right-of-way here.



Looking west on Lakeview Road near Lakeview Road Recreation Area. An off-road trail with narrow separation from the roadway is recommended here.



Looking west on Foote Road at Pratham Road. Sprague Brook County Park is on the right hand side. An on-road shared lane is recommended here.



Looking north at inactive Buffalo & Pittsburgh Railroad near Sibley Road. Potential location of a trail.

Hamburg is also connected to the waterfront by two separate approaches. The first is an off-road trail along North Creek Road and Lakeview Road to the Old Lake Shore Road. This off-road section is proposed to be in the county right-of-way along these roads. An on-road shared lane is proposed as a connection to Eighteen Mile Creek County Park. The second approach is an on-road shared lane route along Amsdell Road and Rogers Road to State Route 5. Trail proposals within the Village limits will require coordination with the municipality.

4.1.5 BOSTON / COLDEN / HOLLAND AREA

This window depicts the proposed routes from the population centers to the undeveloped Boston Forest County Park, Sprague Brook County Park and several county forests. The population area of Holland will be connected to Sprague Brook County Park by using an on-road shared lane on Holland-Glenwood Road to Crump Road and then into Pratham Road to Foote Road, where the main entrance to the park is located.

The population center of Colden is proposed to be connected to Sprague Brook County Park by using the inactive Buffalo & Pittsburgh railroad corridor parallel to Route 240 as an off-road trail. As described earlier, this railroad corridor has been inactive for some time as stated in the Town of Colden and Town of Springville Master Plans. This area will also be connected to an undeveloped park, Boston Forest County Park, by using on-road shared lanes along Boston-Colden Road to an on-road bike lane through the Village of Patchin on Boston State Road back to on-road shared lanes on Trevett Road, Brown Hill Road and Feddick Road, where the Boston Forest is located.

A 9.7 mile loop has been proposed in this area by utilizing the inactive railroad corridor and another off-road trail which follows a combination railroad and utility corridor (power line) which runs through Patchin, connected by on-road shared lanes at Boston-Colden Road to the north and Morse Road to the south.

4.1.6 EVANS / BRANT AREA

The proposed recreational trails in the Evans-Brant area all have a common theme: connecting the population areas of Angola, Farnham and Brant with the beaches of Lake Erie, including but not limited to Wendt Beach County Park, Bennett Beach County Park and Evangola State Park.

The Town of Evans has taken an initiative and began the planning of an off-road multi-use pathway along Old Lake Shore Road within the county right-of-way from the border of Hamburg at Eighteen Mile Creek south to Evangola State Park. Approximately 2.8 miles of the nearly 14 mile off-road trail has been funded and could be under construction in 2004. There is an existing off-road trail through Evangola State Park along Old Lake Shore Road. A proposed on-road shared lane will connect from this trail to Lotus Point Road. It will continue on Lotus Point Road and cross Route 5 to Commercial Street into the Village of Farnham. The other on-road shared lane trail (5.0 miles) will follow North Main Street out of the Village of Angola to Bennett Road. The proposed trail follows Bennett Road to Bennett Beach County Park. Commercial Street in Farnham and a portion of North Main Street in Angola are local roads requiring a partnership with the municipality.

4.1.7 GOWANDA / COLLINS AREA

The proposed trails in the Gowanda / Collins area connects the Village of Gowanda and the Hamlet of Collins Center. This 8 mile loop will require partnerships to utilize some local town roads (such as Wheeler Road and Richardson Road) and must be coordinated with the local government. The 1.5 mile off-road trail is proposed to be in the county right-of-way on Taylor Hollow Road north of Gowanda Village. A 1.8 mile on-road shared lane is proposed to get to Zoar Valley State Multi-Recreational Area using Gowanda-Zoar Road and Unger Road.

4.1.8 SPRINGVILLE / SARDINIA AREA

The proposed recreational trails in the Springville-Sardinia area have a unique prospect in that the Buffalo and Pittsburgh Railroad has an inactive railbed going through Springville and continues north up to



Looking west on Bennett Road near Route 5. The Evans Center Baseball Fields are on the right hand side. The recommendation in this area is for an on-road shared lane.



Looking south on Old Lakeshore Road near Sturgeon Point Road. The Town of Evans is planning a multi-use pathway separate from the roadway within the county right-of-way in this area.



Looking south on Route 438 into Village of Gowanda near Taylor Hollow Road. An on-road shared lane is proposed here.



Looking north on Taylor Hollow Road near Village of Gowanda. An off-road trail is proposed within the right-of-way here.



Looking west on Genesee Road at Savage Road near the Village of Sardinia. An on-road bike lane is recommended here.



Looking north at inactive Buffalo & Pittsburgh Railroad on Morse Road. This is a potential location for an off-road trail.

Sprague Brook County Park. This railbed ties the populous of the Village of Springville north to Sprague Brook County Park making this 5.5 mile route very family oriented due to the gentle gradient and its fairly straight alignment.

The Village of Springville is also tied to Scoby Dam County Park by a proposed on-road bike lane along County Route 39 and New York State Route 219 to Scoby Road. A partnership with the State will be required for this segment.

The residents of the Town of Sardinia can use the proposed on-road bike lane along Genesee Road past the active county forests to the proposed on-road shared lane on Pratham Road to get to Sprague Brook County Park.

To get between Springville and Sardinia, an off-road trail has been proposed for the Niagara Mohawk utility corridor which lies on an old railroad bed and runs parallel to Route 39. It is felt that this route is better suited for a bike trail because Route 39 is a high volume, high speed road. To access the rail corridor, an on-road bike lane south of Sardinia is proposed on a local road. This creates a 21 mile loop around this area.

Another loop is being proposed by using an off-road trail along the same combination railroad and utility corridor described for the Town of Boston. This intersects the railroad corridor just north of Springville and runs north past and through other County Forests up to Morse Road.

4.2 COST SUMMARY FOR INITIAL PHASE

Development costs for the recreation trail component varies among the types of routes and their applications to the existing conditions. The following table summarizes these costs which are broken down by bicycle facility type and trail areas. See Section 4.1 for a description of the initial phase of trail proposals.

A few points worth emphasizing include:

- *All opinions of probable development costs are 2003 dollars. This provides the baseline reference point for the entire project and will aid in estimating future costs as specific projects are developed. Approximately 3% inflation would be added to each year beyond 2003.*
- *The project costs are for three “proposed” recreation trail features identified in the legend of each map: on-road bike lane, on-road shared lane, off-road trail. These features have not yet been designed or funded. All other features identified as “existing” have already been constructed or are already funded and/or designed. For example, a portion of the new multi-use pathway in the Town of Evans may not be built but is considered existing because it is funded.*
- *Unit pricing for typical costs of the bike lane and shared lane were taken from the GBNRTC Regional Bikeway Implementation Plan and were reviewed, confirmed and used by Wendel Duchscherer for this report. Costs of the off-road bike trail were developed from commercial pricing guides and Wendel Duchscherer’s current portfolio work.*
- *A contingency of 20% has been added to the estimates to account for the unknown existing site conditions and the over-all level of detail at this stage of design.*
- *A general requirements fee of 5% has been added to account for anticipated contractual costs.*
- *An engineering fee of 10% has been added for the design component of all trail systems.*

**ERIE COUNTY RECREATIONAL TRAILS- INITIAL PHASE
COST SUMMARY TABLE ***

* The total projected development costs for this study are in 2003 dollars and includes a 20% contingency to account for the preliminary nature of the design, 5% to allow for the general contractual requirements and 10% for the engineering fees.

The total projected development costs for the initial phase of recreational trails are approximately 32.5 million dollars. Over the anticipated twenty year life span of this master plan, this would

AREA	ON ROAD BIKE LANE \$24,024 / mile	ON ROAD SHARED LANE \$8,765 / mile	OFF ROAD TRAIL \$453,710 / mile	AREA TOTALS
CLARENCE / AKRON	2.54 mi \$61,000	9.58 mi \$84,000	6.55 mi \$2,955,000	\$3,100,000
DEPEW / LANCASTER	8.04 mi \$193,000	6.86 mi \$60,000	6.47 mi \$2,929,000	\$3,182,000
EAST AURORA / WALES	3.71 mi \$89,000	12.79 mi \$112,000	4.24 mi \$1,899,000	\$2,100,000
HAMBURG / ORCHARD PARK	1.93 mi \$46,000	17.20 mi \$151,000	12.02 mi \$5,403,000	\$5,600,000
BOSTON / COLDEN / HOLLAND	0.81 mi \$19,000	17.47 mi \$153,000	13.07 mi \$5,928,000	\$6,100,000
EVANS / BRANT	0.37 mi \$9,000	4.95 mi \$43,000	7.73 mi \$3,548,000	\$3,600,000
GOWANDA / COLLINS	- \$0	6.82 mi \$60,000	2.52 mi \$1,140,000	\$1,200,000
SPRINGVILLE / SARDINIA	7.96 mi \$191,000	3.49 mi \$31,000	16.38 mi \$7,433,000	\$7,655,000
PHASE TOTALS	25.4 miles \$608,000	79.2 miles \$694,000	69.0 miles \$31,235,000	\$32,537,000

result in expenditures of roughly 1.6 million dollars annually for trail development. However, it can be assumed that most projects would include either federal or state grant assistance that would reduce the County share to half the projected total, or about \$800,000 per year. This is consistent with current county spending on recreational trail development. For example, in 2002, Erie County allocated \$847,000 for recreational trails.

Another potential cost savings for trails proposed along County roads would be through the County Policy on bicycle facilities (Chapter 22 of the County Highway Design Manual; adopted by Erie County Legislature in 1990). Under this program, as County roads are re-built the costs of the proposed bicycle facilities can be added in as appropriate.

4.3 COUNTY-WIDE RECREATIONAL TRAIL NETWORK

After the initial phase of community-based trail linkages have been established, the proposals for the later phases of the recreational trail master plan recommend county-wide park-to-park linkages. The numbered linkages summarized below are shown on Figure 4-9.

1. *In the Town of Clarence, the on-road shared lane proposed for Goodrich Road would be extended north to the county line. From that point a similar on-road shared lane would follow the Tonawanda Creek westward to connect with existing waterfront trails.*
2. *Also in Clarence, an off-road trail along a natural gas pipeline has been proposed that runs westward into Amherst.*
3. *It is recommended that the existing off-road trail which ends in Clarence be continued westward through Amherst. Recognizing the current opposition by residents along this route (known as the Peanut Line) to develop this trail, it would be possible to follow on-road options along the proposed corridor in order to complete this vital link into Ellicott Creek County Park.*
4. *An on-road bike lane has been proposed along Crittenden Road that connects the Village of Alden to Akron Falls County Park. A small section along Route 5 will require coordination with New York State.*
5. *Proposed on-road shared lane along Ransom Road from Walden Pond Park to Clarence Hollow.*
6. *Off-road trail that follows a natural gas pipeline along Pavement Road in the Town of Lancaster*

north to the existing off-road trail in Clarence (see Figure 4-2).

- 7. In order to connect the Village of Alden with the various parks in Lancaster, an off-road trail has been proposed within the right-of-way for State Route 20 (Broadway). A partnership with the State will be required.*
- 8. On-road shared lane proposed for Girdle/Schwartz Road in the Town of Elma creates a connection from the Village of East Aurora into Lancaster.*
- 9. Proposed linkages to Elma Meadows within the Towns of Elma and Marilla via Bullis Road, Bowen Road, Rice Road, Two Rod Road (state road) and Stolle Road (local road).*
- 10. Proposed off-road trail along Route 16 (Seneca Street) from Knox State Park into West Seneca. This is a state route that will require their coordination.*
- 11. Proposed off-road trail along Route 20A that connects the Villages of East Aurora and Orchard Park. This is also a state route that will require their coordination.*
- 12. Combination off-road trail (State Route 20A right-of-way) and on-road shared lane (State Route 78, Hunters Creek Road, and Center Line Road) to connect the Village of East Aurora to Hunters Creek County Park. New York State partnerships required.*
- 13. A proposed off-road trail that follows a natural gas pipeline west from Hunters Creek Park into Chestnut Ridge Park and ultimately into the Town of Eden. This would be a good opportunity to also create a parallel equestrian trail for the horse-back riders interests in the East Aurora area.*
- 14. Continued on-road shared lane along Center Road south to Sprague Brook County Park.*
- 15. Proposed off-road trail that follows a power line corridor from Hunters Creek Park south to Emery Park and ultimately down into the Sardinia area County Forests.*
- 16. Continuation of the off-road trail within the Route 16 state right-of-way which would complete the link between East Aurora and Holland. Could also*

continue south of Holland into Sardinia.

17. *Proposed off-road trail that follows natural gas pipeline from North Boston up into West Seneca.*
18. & 19. *Proposed off-road trails that combines the railroad corridor trails described for the Boston/Colden/Holland area. Each to be done in two segments: north into Orchard Park and south into Springville.*
20. *Proposed off-road trail within the Route 62 state right-of-way south from Hamburg Village through Eden, North Collins and into Gowanda. Partnership with New York State required.*
21. *Proposed on-road bike lane west out of Eden along Eden-Evans Center Road into Angola Village.*
22. *Proposed on-road shared lane from North Collins into Farnham via Cain Road.*
23. *Series of proposed on-road shared lane routes that connect Boston Forest with North Collins. One segment of non-county road included.*
24. *Proposed on-road bike lane that connects Springville to Collins along Route 39. Partnership with New York State required.*
25. *An extension of the abandoned rail corridor trail described on Figure 4-3 from Ransom Road east to Crittenden Road.*

The focus of the Recreational Trail Study has been centered in the rural areas due to the comparative lack of trail facilities that currently are planned in the suburban areas of Erie County. The proposed links to the urban areas are illustrated in Figure 4-10. Both the initial phase and the later phase of recreational trail proposals will tie-in with the planned linkages shown along the eastern and southern edges of the urban linkages map. In the urban areas, the attempt of the Recreational Trail Study has also been to fill in the gaps that exist in the current network, primarily along the waterfront (see Section 2.0).